

II.—WHAT ARE THE THINGS MOST ESSENTIAL IN PREPARATION FOR PREACHING?

BY W. GARDEN BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D., EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND,
PROFESSOR OF APOLOGETICS, AND OF ECCLESIASTICAL AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY, NEW COLLEGE.

IN answering this question, it can not but be highly useful to ask what kinds of preparation were resorted to by our great Master; for there are important points in which His example in this respect is applicable to us, notwithstanding all the difference between us. Of such books as now constitute a theological library, our Lord was completely destitute, but there were three books of which He made a most abundant and profitable use: the Bible—or, as it was then, the Old Testament,—the heart and life of man, and the world of nature. The Bible furnished Him with His message; but the human heart had to be much studied, in order that He might understand its condition and find modes of access to it, doors by which to introduce the message, and in order that He might learn how to fit the one to the other: the remedy to the disease, the rebuke to the conscience, the gift to the needs of the subject. It was to help Him in this department that He made so diligent a study of the world of nature; for as outward nature and the nature of man had the same Author, there could not but be affinities between them; and as man was so familiar with the objects of nature, spread out as these were continually before his eyes, they were extremely handy as illustrations of things divine; and the analogies between nature and grace were fitted to make the mysteries of the Kingdom more clear to the intellect, more impressive to the memory, and more congenial to the business of daily life.

But besides this, as our Lord's soul was profoundly penetrated by the infinite value and indispensable need of prayer, so doubtless He brought that conviction continually to bear on His work as a preacher. For if there be one spiritual lesson more than another that we derive from His teaching, it is the marvelous power and glorious privilege of prayer. What made prayer of such infinite value was, that it was the medium of communication between man and God. There are many mysteries in the relation of the human nature of Jesus to God the Father; but one thing is very plain from His constant practise, that even for Him as a man it was necessary that He should have unceasing communion with the Father by prayer if He was to live a holy life Himself, and if He was to make a due impression on the hearts of men. What a world of instruction there lay in the fact of His having spent a whole night in prayer to God previously to the selection of His twelve Apostles! How earnest He must have been to obtain light and grace from the Father, first, that He might choose the right men, and then that the men whom He did choose might be furnished from on